The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home.

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The Heart of the Tree.

What does he plant who plants a tree?
He plants a friend of sun and sky;
He plants the flag of breezes free;
The shaft of beauty towering high;
He plants a home to heaven anigh
For song and mother-croon of bird
In hushed and happy twilight heard,—
The treble of heaven's harmony,—
These things he plants who plants a tree.

What does he plant who plants a tree?
He plants cool shade and tender rain,
And seed and bud of days to be,
And years that fade and flush again;
He plants the glory of the plain;
He plants the forest's heritage;
The harvest of the coming age;
The joy that unborn eyes shall see,—
These things he plants who plants a tree.

What does he plant who plants a tree?
He plants, in sap and leaf and wood,
In love of home and loyalty
And far-off thought of civil good,—
His blessing on the neighbourhood
Who in the hollow of his hand
Holds all the growth of all our land,—
A nation's growth from sea to sea
Stirs in his heart who plants a tree.

—*The Century.*

The Life which is Life Indeed:

A CONFIRMATION ADDRESS

BY THE

REV. JOSEPH WOOD.

I. Tim.: vi., 19—"Lay hold on the Life which is Life indeed" (R.V.).

How few of us know what it is to live. The great majority of men seem to me to be only half-alive. A man's nature is a building with many windows, but only in two or three do you see a light burning; it is a house with many rooms, some of them spacious and well-proportioned, yet most of his days the man lives in the kitchen, and some rooms in the house he never visits at all. How much God-like faculty is fusting in each one of us unused! Many a man has unsuspected powers of observation and action which he never has a moment's time or energy to cultivate, so immersed is he in the kitchen of his life. And some are artists, poets, musicians, observers, philosophers in the bud, little heeding the wealth which lies undeveloped in the various chambers of the house. Men little dream what they miss in their exclusive attention to the one paying faculty which absorbs their whole thought and care. They might be so much, and they are so little—only half-alive.

What is it to live? To-day I wish to press it upon you that it is a solemn thing; nay, were not God around us with His grace, an awful thing to live. Life seems to me to grow more earnest, more pathetic, more big with meaning year by year. We are fearfully and

wonderfully made, more fearfully and wonderfully than any of us know. What a human life is capable of knowing, enjoying, suffering, we scarcely apprehend. We only dimly conceive what it is to live, so narrow is our range, so limited our interests. To think freely, the open eye to observe all that is beautiful and good around us, vivid intercourse and sympathy with nature and man, be that intercourse glad or sorrowful, this is *life*. To love largely, widely and deeply; to embrace many within the range of affection; the joy of comradeship, the exhilaration of generous giving, this is *life*. To make one's daily duty the stage on which is acted out a noble and moving drama; "the trivial round and common task," dignified by greatness of motive and the sway of conscience; days and weeks linked on to heavenly principle, this is *life*.

It is easy, I know, to slip over all the deeper and more serious elements of the problem of life, and to persuade ourselves that we are but butterflies in a braver form, though with a duller dress, that the true policy of life is to sport gaily from flower to flower, while the sunlight is in the air, and to fold ourselves in some safe, leafy nook when the sky is overcast. But this easy philosophy of life has never been long possible. Men have tried it, nations have tried it, ages have tried it. The end has ever been some sad catastrophe in which man has been compelled to learn, by shame and misery, that there are such things as conscience, justice, responsibility, righteousness, and the avenging furies.

But do not mistake me, young friends. In asking you to take a serious view of life I do not wish you to think that this is to cast a dark shadow on your lot, or that you are to be sad and gloomy. Not so. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth." God has given you health, spirits, hope, youth, the power of enjoyment. And why, save but that you may enjoy them? He has given you *more* health, *more* strength, and *more* spirits than you need to earn your daily bread, or to learn your daily task. And why? To enable you to grow in body and soul. And that you will only do if you are happy. The human soul is like a plant, and requires a good deal of sunshine to make it grow and ripen. And the Heavenly Father has given you sunshine in your hearts that you may grow into healthy-minded men and sweet-minded women. If young people have not sunshine enough, if they are kept down and crushed in youth by anxiety, by fear, by overwork, or by dark and superstitious notions about God, then their souls and minds become more or less stunted, and all their life long they are crippled and deformed because they have not rejoiced in their youth as God intended them to.

Rejoice then in the sunshine and the breeze, in the play of your powers both of mind or body, in the thrill, the leap, the gladness of mere living in a world where there are roses, and stars, the running brooks, sweet apple blossoms, nesting birds, and loving human hearts. Rejoice in all manly and womanly pleasures, rejoice in art and song, in poetry and friendship, in skill and strength; rejoice in freedom and in thinking for yourselves. You are not to be sickly, anæmic saints; you are not to be afraid of dangers. No, but in all, you are to live the Life which is Life indeed.

Look at these words. In the Authorised Version they run "Lay hold on eternal life," and perhaps you scarcely know what eternal life may mean. You think of it as a thing of duration rather than kind and quality. But in the Revised Version the precept receives a great illustration—"Lay hold on the Life which is Life indeed." That is what the Bible means by eternal life—a certain kind and quality of life, the life which is really life.

"I want to *live*," says a young man standing on the threshold, "not to creep and mope and drone"—and thinks of a life of excitement, adventure and pleasure, a life that shall be quick, vivid, full and strong.

It is a natural wish, and all sorts of voices promise him the life he longs for.

The World calls him and says, "I will give you the wine of life;" and Pleasure calls him, "Come live with me and be my love;" and Money-making calls him, "Ours is the only life worth living;" and then a still, small voice is heard saying, "Lay hold on the Life which is Life indeed."

What is that life?

1. It is a manly life. It calls for the greatest courage—*cour*-age, *heart*-age. It may well be that your courage will never be tested like that of the heroes who are your delights—on the battlefield, or in the blazing house or sinking ship. Such tests of manliness come to few. Yet, on the other hand, the daily life of every one of us teems with occasions which will try the temper of our manliness as searchingly as any battlefield. We are to be soldiers in the war which God for ever wages with falsehood, cruelty, wrong, disease, and injustice. This is the life which is life indeed, the manly life of battle against all deceit and iniquity, and foulness, and vice. To say "No"—what courage it sometimes needs! To be true to conscience, loyal to right, brave in defence of the weak and wronged, what manliness is required! This is what it is to live.

2. It is a pure life. You know how much the Gospel makes of purity. To keep thoughts clean and the soul white; to shut the ear to all foul jests and filthy talking; never to allow impure thoughts to dwell in the mind; never to sully your own or another's chastity; to reverence your bodies as temples of the Holy Ghost—this is the life to which you are called. In ancient days there were Red Cross Knights

pledged to fight for the rescue of Christ's tomb at Jerusalem from the hands of the heathen. In these days we need *White* Cross Knights, pledged to rescue, not Christ's tomb, but Christ's image in human hearts from defilement. Believe it, young friends, purity is the very crown of manliness. Without it you cannot be manly, for manliness is chivalrous, is high-minded and generous, full of reverence for humanity. Watch over your purity, guard it jealously. The pleasure of self-control is greater than the pleasure of self-indulgence. Defile not, besmear not your own nature. Do you know that striking little poem of William Blake's called "The Defiled Sanctuary?" Here it is—a parable for all who have ears to hear:—

I saw a chapel all of gold
. . . . . .

I saw a serpent rise between
The white pillars and the door,
And he forced and forced and forced
Till he the golden hinges tore:

And along the pavement sweet,
Set with pearls and rubies bright,
All his shining length he drew,—
Till upon the altar white

He vomited his poison out
On the bread and on the wine.
So I turned into a sty,
And laid me down among the swine.

3. It is a loving life. If you want to know the secret of full, happy, buoyant, musical life, all tingling with joy, all bright with sunshine, learn to love. The man who does not love has not yet begun to live, or having lived is dead. Life is measured by its intensity of love. And what is it to love? Ah! it is ten thousand things. It is to think kindly and feel deeply; it is to be patient when men vex you, forgiving when men wrong you; it is to believe that one act of charity, one tear of pity, one cup of cold water held to thirsty lips, one sweet compassion, counts for more in the treasury of heaven than all learning, and all orthodoxy, and all wealth; it is to be merciful even to the unmerciful, to think of others' happiness more than your own, to be magnanimous and not easily offended; above all, it is the great joy of so loving God and man that all else is as dust in the balance. He who knows himself loved of God has entered into the very heart of life's best gladness. All enjoyment, all peace, all exhilaration, all music it is to love and be loved. This is life indeed, throbbing, quivering, overflowing, all-conquering, elevating. Love surmounts all difficulties and is fruitful in good works. The life which is love can never die.

This is the Life which is Life indeed, full, generous, quick and immortal. So many men have only a thimbleful of life. They are cups not yet filled with the wine of life—for as yet they do not love. But he who loves as Christ loved, has life flowing through him as a great free tide. Life, the religious life, is not merely peace, nor merely rest, nor merely pardon, nor merely safety, but the wealth and abundance of love. To love abundantly is to live abundantly, and this is the one thing that lasts. For it is the very life of God which is love. And in the final account what tells is this. The final test of the religious life is not religiousness but love; not what I have believed or achieved, but how I have discharged the common charities of life. In the final account the words we shall hear will sound not of theology but of love; not of churches and denominations but of feeding the hungry and clothing the naked; not of creeds and ceremonies but of the sick and heavy-laden; not of Bibles and Prayer Books but of cups of cold water in the name of Christ.

Young friends, to-day you declare yourselves on the side of the Life which is Life indeed. You have come to see and feel the great place religion should play in your lives; from childhood you have lived unconsciously something of the Christian life, and now you are going to live it consciously and of set purpose. We ask no vows from you nor the repetition of any creed, but in your own hearts you dedicate yourselves to that form of character which we call Christian; that stooping to the humblest, that aiming at the highest, that surrender of self to God, Truth and Duty, that manliness, purity and self-forgetting love to God and man which is Life indeed. There is no outward pledge exacted, but you make a secret pledge, yet more binding, to hold yourselves at God's disposal, to follow Christ in his work of charity, and with prayer, watchfulness and effort so to open the gates of the soul to the inflow of the Divine that you may know what it is to live and to live more abundantly.

Notes and Jottings.

The death of Dean Farrar (most people never became accustomed to his new dignity, and still thought of him as Canon Farrar) has removed a teacher of great influence over the English middle-class mind. He appealed but slightly to the fastidious taste of the scholar, and he never came into close contact with working-class life. His "Life of Christ" was by far the most popular of his books, but it was in the sermons on "Eternal Hope" that he came nearest to being a religious leader. The softened view of the hereafter, and the quiet neglect of hell, which is characteristic of the newer orthodoxy,

are due largely to his influence. Behind the exuberance of his metaphors and his unrestrained pulpit style, there was deep emotion and earnest simplicity of purpose. English religious feeling always responds to these qualities, and it is seldom offended by a habit of emphasis or rhetorical exaggeration. Dean Farrar's method was part of himself, but at the same time it was exactly suited to the tastes and limitations of his audience.

The announcement that Mr. Silvester Horne has resigned his pulpit at Kensington, in order to undertake the superintendence of a Central Mission at Whitfield's Tabernacle, is one of considerable interest. It is another step in the direction of trying to grapple earnestly with the acute problems of city churches on broad and somewhat novel lines. Social work among the young people is to be a special feature of Mr. Horne's mission, following the example of some of the large institutional churches of America. It is significant that the leaders of London Congregationalism have felt that for this new evangelistic effort they need not only a preacher of popular gifts, but also a man of wide culture.

We believe that these large Mission centres are still on their trial, and that they will soon create special difficulties of their own. Religion is not only or even chiefly a matter of crowds, and it will require great watchfulness if the institutions are to be kept from swamping the Christianity. Still, they are full of fresh possibilities, and in that alone there is great attraction. We should like to see some of our churches, which from the drift of population or other circumstances are attended by a constantly dwindling congregation, attacking the religious problem on fresh lines. We are not likely to be tempted to go too far in the direction of experiment and innovation. But if this is to be done, two conditions must be observed. Every effort of the kind must be a united one, and carried out not by the remnants of a dying congregation, but with generous support and on well-conceived lines. And, secondly, the best men must be secured to guide and superintend the work.

It is very significant for us that just at the time when the whole future of our National Conference is coming up for discussion, the Committee of the Congregational Union has put forward a scheme for reorganisation. It is of a very drastic character, and some of the details are likely to meet with considerable opposition; but speaking generally it is an attempt to meet the difficulty and weakness of isolated action, which is such a source of danger among ourselves. The right of any individual church to administer its own affairs "free from external control" is jealously guarded, but it is declared that there are duties and responsibilities which concern Congregational Churches as a whole, and these can be most effectively fulfilled by a union of churches. Among these objects are several which have come before our own Conference Committee, such as the supply of students for the ministry, the adequate support of the ministry, ministerial superannuation, church extension, and church aid. Undoubtedly the Congregational Union is in a far riper state for assuming these large responsibilities than our Conference under its present constitution can pretend to be. But the remarkable identity of need and policy is both instructive and encouraging.

After several years of hard work, Mr. Charles Booth has just issued the volumes of his "Life and Labour of the People in London, dealing with Religious Influences." There are seven volumes in all, and only special students are likely to deal with the whole mass of evidence and statistics which they contain. But the seventh volume, which contains Mr. Booth's summary and conclusions, may be purchased separately for five shillings. It is of great value and full of shrewd and kindly criticism upon the methods of modern religious work, which will be of interest far beyond the London area. Another new book of the month, also appealing to the social interest, is "The Life and Letters of the late Bishop of Durham, Dr. Westcott." He was a remarkable example of the combination of rare and exact scholarship with practical sagacity and broad human sympathies.

I tell you of a truth, he who loves, his heart is a paradise on earth. He has God in him, for God is love.

Art and Life.

A SERMON IN STONES.

To those who are incredulous as to the spiritual greatness of the Middle Ages, I would instance, as a convincing proof, the series of sculptures designed and in part executed by Giotto on his Bell Tower in Florence. Anyone who takes the trouble to examine and understand them will discover that Dante was not an isolated genius, and that his profound thought and insight were shared by others. The fact is, reluctant as the modern mind may be to accept the conclusion, that Dante and Giotto were simply the spokesmen of their age, and that behind their supreme work was a wide-spread spiritual culture much in advance of ours. These sculptures do not attract many travellers. I do not often meet with visitors to Florence who have studied them. In spite of the circumstance that they have journeyed hundreds of miles and spent many pounds to get to this glorious old city, these precious gems of art receive, notwithstanding Mr. Ruskin's endeavours, very scanty attention. This in itself is significant and depressing. The sculptures are on the lowest story of the Tower. They are within comfortable reach of the eye, and though five or six hundred years old, are still easy decipherable. But they are *small*, and the modern mind expects of a good thing that it shall be *big*. They are full of meaning and demand scrutiny, whereas modern taste looks in decoration for something showy and flourishing, and without purpose. Purposeless art, however, is what you will never find in the great ages of art. A picture or a carving was then intended to express and to awaken a spiritual impression. So with these sculptures. They were wrought in a period

when noble, spiritual impressions were continually being expressed and awakened. Photographs of the whole series have been framed and put up in our schoolroom at Mansfield, and it is interesting to notice their effect on children and people. They seem plain, humble things, not much to look at in the eyes of the majority, who would probably greatly prefer some coloured illustrations from the magazines. Most of those who go in and out of the room scarcely glance at them. They are "dull" and "dry," not pretty nor obvious. They suggest *difficulty*. They deal largely with scenes familiar to every Sunday school teacher and scholar, and have none of the conventionality of modern religious pictures; but they are too *exacting* on the faculties. A picture should not demand to be studied. Of course there are some who feel their astonishing beauty, who ask with enthusiasm, "Where did these come from? Where can they be obtained?" And, of course, like all lovely things, they gradually make their beauty felt. I saw one of the youngest of the teachers only last Sunday taking a small child round from frame to frame, with obvious intellectual pleasure. But the point is, did not Giotto work for a more intelligent and spiritual public than now exists? I am afraid he did.

Now, what is the story he has written on these stones on the bottom of the wall of his tower, for every passer-by to look at? It is a record of the Rise of Man, from his first condition as scarcely distinguishable from the ground he lies on, to his last state of perfect civilisation, clothed and seated, with long white beard, old and experienced, conscious of the angel in him, and listening in devout attitude for the music of Heaven. It is enough for some who have seen the photographs in our schoolroom that they savour of *papistry*. How deplorably ignorant some Protestants are of the old Catholicism! No wonder High Churchism makes strides among us. From one point of view it is a good thing that it does.

The age of Dante and Giotto stands out pre-eminently as the age of *Imagination*,—that is, of "Reason in her highest mood," not dwelling, as commonly now, on material objects and antiquities, and the muddy beginnings of things, but freely playing round the accepted truths and principles of life. This is exactly what we find in these sculptures. Everywhere is thought exalted and refined by spiritual insight. In the first Adam lies on his back on the clod, but no longer merely of the earth, earthy, for he looks up with wonder into his Maker's face. Christ, having breathed His spirit into him, leans towards him, with the Book of Life under his arm, and speaks. The sound of his Father's voice in his ear is the call to man to rise and be a child of God. The consciousness of whose son he is is the first step in man's progress. The fear of the Lord, says the sculptor, is the beginning of wisdom, and of civilisation also. In the next panel Adam sleeps, while Eve is drawn from his side. Christ holds her firmly in his left hand, for it is her glory to yield and cling to the one she loves. Above her head rises a tree with ivy wound about the stem, suggestive first of the helpfulness of woman, and then of her serpent-like influence when she is untrue to her womanhood. The fruits of the tree are filbert nuts, in pairs, symbolic of the true equality and unity of the marriage state.

In the third sculpture Adam and Eve have risen from the ground and stand totteringly on their legs, clad in a simple cloth which she has spun. She has a spindle of flax in her hand. He works the ground with a hoe. They no longer live like the animals, on the fruit of the forest, but make the earth bring forth what they need—the beginning of the industrial era. On the right an animal of some sort, a quadruped—perhaps a bear—also rises on his feet in imitation of his betters, but with less success. He opens his mouth in vain to reach an apple on a branch above. In the fourth scene man has at last obtained a roof for his head—a tent of leather, and can sit down in security to look at his flock. The sheep—the old companions of the artist's boyhood—are carved with the utmost care and feeling, as is a puppy that watches them, a jolly little rascal, sitting on his hind legs and learning his business. Next, having a roof, and a seat to sit upon, and some leisure and a few tools, man turns his attention to the cultivation of his mind, and begins with—the first and last feature of medieval education—Music. He makes a pipe of wood—such as the Tuscan shepherds still use. From wood he then proceeds to metals, and works at a forge in bronze—such a forge as Giotto must himself

have often seen in and about his city. So far nothing has been said of a Fall. Giotto evidently did not lay stress on the later central doctrine of Calvinism, which doubtless is a misfortune in the eyes of Protestants. Except for the reference in the twining ivy in the second sculpture, Giotto's only Fall of Man is in the far more serious apostasy of Noah, who lies drunk and uncovered in his wine bower. The old Catholic artist saw more of the Devil's work in intemperance and its accompanying sensuality then in the taking of the apple of knowledge.

The eighth scene is entirely Giotto's—non-Biblical and secular if you like, but grand. Seated in a high-backed and carved wooden chair, evidently possessing some degree of comfort and refinement in his home, man looks up into the heavens and explores the infinite. I want my readers to study this sculpture for themselves, for it is very remarkable, and I have selected it for our illustration. It is a very characteristic piece of Gothic work. *Physical beauty is entirely and almost rudely subordinated to spiritual expression.* See the very rough carving of the shoulder and arms. It is not because Giotto is hopelessly ignorant of anatomy and cannot carve the human form better, but because he desires to concentrate your attention on *the upturned face.* The very soul of the man is in his rapt look, as he gazes from his few paltry feet of earth into the boundless firmament. He sees the constellations, notes on his parchment map the position of the stars, and is absorbed in the wonder and majesty of it all. More than that. Giotto believed with the poet that an "undevout astronomer is mad." This astronomer sees more than the heavenly bodies. He is conscious of spiritual beings beyond them, of God and His Angels in Paradise, whence they look down on humanity and govern all things in heaven and earth. The fear of the Lord is the inspiration of knowledge, in this and in all the pursuits of the mind. From this sense, not of a blank dead space over our heads, but of being greater and better than man, comes the spring and the zest of all further labour and civilisation, as we will see in another paper.

E. I. F.

You have only a day to pass on earth: so act as to pass that day in peace.

National Conference.

LIVERPOOL MEETINGS.

We very much regret that the necessity of getting out the *Seed Sower* in time for localising makes it impossible for us to give even a condensed report of these important meetings. We are able, however, through the kindness of the Secretary of the Guilds' Union, to print the report of the Union for 1900-3, presented at the annual meeting on Monday evening, April 20th. Mr. Wood has also sent us an advance copy of his address on "Church Needs and Conference Ideals," the latter part of which, with its far-reaching and momentous proposals, we lay before our readers.

THE GUILDS' UNION REPORT FOR 1902-3.

The Council has held four meetings since its appointment at the last Annual Meeting, viz., May 20th, 1902, at Essex Hall, London; October 21st, 1902, at Manchester College, Oxford; January 15th, 1903, at the Memorial Hall, Manchester; and April 20th, 1903, at Ullett Road Church, Liverpool. At each of these meetings the welfare and interest of the Guilds forming the Union have been under careful consideration, and methods for bringing the Guilds into closer touch with each other and for spreading the Guild Idea have been frequently discussed. The Council are of opinion that the time is approaching when a determined effort might with advantage be made to group the Guilds in certain districts into local Unions for conference, religious fellowship, and mutual encouragement. By this means the separte societies would realise their vital connection with the larger body, and thus more effectively stimulate each other to good endeavour. A good, hearty rally of kindred souls, with united purpose, is a splendid tonic to the spiritual life of all concerned. London has led the way in this matter. The inaugural meeting of the London Union of seven Guilds at Essex Church in February last was an inspiring occasion, which will not soon be forgotten. Birmingham would seem to be a good centre for the Old Meeting, Newhall Hill, Oldbury, Kidderminster, Wolverhampton, and Lye Guilds; Leeds for Mill Hill, Bradford, Sheffield, Hull, and Huddersfield Guilds; Chowbent for Leigh, Swinton, and Bolton Guilds; whilst the societies at Bridport, Manchester, Liverpool, Leicester, Middlesbrough, and Norwich might make themselves centres of influence in their respective districts.

The idea of local Unions was one of the suggestions made by the President at the last Annual Meeting. Another was the desirability of undertaking some united effort, such as a Country Holiday Home, to which all Guilds might recommend those needing rest and health. A third was the promotion of religious culture by means of essays on subjects selected by the Council.

The first of these suggestions has been partially carried into effect; the second remains to be carefully considered; the third has been adopted with a measure of success.

The Council, last November, offered substantial prizes for the best essays on the following subjects:—"The Story of St. Paul," "Richard Baxter," and "Hymns and Hymn-makers of the 19th Century." The essays sent in are as follows:—Sixteen on "Richard Baxter," from members of the Chowbent, Essex Church (London), Old Meeting (Birmingham), Highgate (London), Mansford Street (London), and Mill Hill (Leeds) Guilds; fourteen on "The Story of St. Paul," from the Huddersfield, Mill Hill (Leeds), Norwich, Old Meeting (Birmingham), Highgate (London), Sheffield, and Stepney (London) Guilds; and two on "Hymns and Hymn-makers of the 19th Century," from the Old Meeting (Birmingham) Guild. The Council anticipated a better response, but opinions expressed by the examiners—"this first set of essays shows very clearly the opportunities for religious training of a most valuable kind which are contained in the Guild movement," and will, we hope, justify the Council for 1903-4 in renewing the experiment. Probably if more time could be assured for preparation the results might be better. Anyhow, it is good, in this day, to win the young to the serious study of subjects which affect their intellectual and social life.

GUILDS' UNION PRIZE ESSAYS.

The following is the award of the examiners:—

"Hymns and Hymn-makers of the 19th Century:"

Examiner, Rev. V. Davis, B.A.

1. Miss Twist ... Old Meeting Guild, Birmingham.
2. Miss Warris...Old Meeting Guild, Birmingham.

"Life of St. Paul:"

Examiner, Rev. W. H. Drummond, B.A.

1. Charles Finch.....Octagon Guild of Service, Norwich.
2. Lydia Wright...Old Meeting Guild, Birmingham.
3. Alice M. Mellor ..... Huddersfield.
4. Alice Hakesley...Old Meeting Guild, B'mingham.
5. Fredk. G. Jackson.....Mill Hill Guild, Leeds.
6. Leonard Short ..... Upperthorpe, Sheffield.

Highly commended: Edith Dearnley, Old Meeting, Birmingham.

Of the seven others the Examiner reports: "All of them show real instruction and careful work."

"Life of Baxter:"

Examiner, Rev. H. Gow, B.A.

1. Amy Withall ..... Highgate Guild.
2. Margaret S. Butler ... Old Meeting Guild, Birmingham.
3. F. Jackson ..... Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds.
4. Alf. Thompson.....Mansford St. Guild, London.
5. Marie Warris...Old Meeting Guild, Birmingham.
6. Minnie Twist...Old Meeting Guild, Birmingham.

Hon. mention: Florence Strulger, Highgate Guild London.

Mr. Gow adds: "The other essays are all painstaking, and deserve much praise. Many of them state the facts of Richard Baxter's life simply and clearly. But, speaking generally, they do not show the same amount of knowledge as the first seven. The merits of the essays must be judged (1) by the knowledge of the facts; (2) by their arrangement; (3) by the statement of them in the writer's own words; (4) by general deductions and reflexions; (5) by good grammar. Several of the essays that failed are still very meritorious, and the experience gained will help the writers in many ways, and will no doubt enable them to compete with more likelihood of success another year."

The returns in the Year-Book for 1903 show that substantial progress has been made during the year. There are now in the Union 34 Guilds with 1934 members. In addition to these, 20 kindred societies with 538 members have sent in returns. All have expressed themselves in harmony with the Guild Idea, which is "to foster the religious life and inspire personal service." Most of them begin their weekly, fortnightly, or monthly meeting with a religious service, and then proceed to consider some topic of religious, moral, social, or literary import. The gratifying feature is that, wherever favourable the members are encouraged to take some active part in the conduct of the meetings, and to give expression to their deeper thoughts or sentiments. In nearly half the Guilds "the Manual of Services and Prayers for use at Guild Meetings," published by the Union, has been adopted. This tends to unity both of form and spirit, and serves to keep the religious ideal of the Union prominently before the members. Another gratifying feature is that in most of the Guilds the members recognise the obligation to engage in some work for the service of others. So we find them active in the church, the Sunday School, and allied institutions. They provide flowers to brighten the sick room, visit absent members, give help to the needy, cheer the aged and afflicted, distribute denominational literature, promote temperance, provide lectures, entertainments, etc.

It is this call to the culture of the better life, and again to spend their gathered treasures for the good of others, that will ultimately win our young people to loyal attachment to the church, and, through the church, to faithful service for the welfare of their fellow-men.

In this belief the Council again commends the Guild movement to the churches, and asks each Guild member to be true to his motto and stand "for God and the good life."

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE GUILDS' UNION.

The annual meetings were held in the Ullet Road Church, Liverpool, on Monday evening, April 20th. The Council met at 5 o'clock, and at 6-30 tea was served in the Schoolroom, when representatives from nearly all our Guilds were present. A religious service was held in the beautiful church at 7-15, when an inspiring address was given by the Rev. J. J. Wright, on the words, "Freely ye have received, freely give." There was a

large congregation, the church being well filled. The business meeting was held in the Church Hall at 8 o'clock. The chair was taken by the Rev. J. Wood. The report, which we give elsewhere, was adopted. Speeches were made by Mr. Freeston, on "Helping;" by Mr. Lummis, on "Reality and Sincerity;" by Mr. R. Robinson, on "Service to the Church;" by the Rev. C. Hargrove, etc., etc.

The meetings were in every way most successful, and gave great encouragement to all present.

Church Needs and Conference Ideals.

In dealing with this subject, Mr. Wood points to the condition of our churches as indicating some very serious weakness, and especially the breakdown of the purely Congregational principle in actual practice. After speaking of the churches' need for more Spiritual Life, of a revived interest in Public Worship, and of a more adequate realisation of the Church Ideal, Mr. Wood proceeds to discuss the further need of a better organisation of our forces, and says: I know the word "organisation" is to some of our friends the symbol of tyranny, priestcraft, ecclesiastical authority, and 40 other terrible things. Only whisper it and they are all in a twitter of fear and suspicion: something deadly is in the air; it keeps them lying awake o' nights; it threatens to deluge the planet; above all, it endangers the precious liberty of every man doing as he pleases, and of every church going to decay as it chooses, and of every preacher preaching just what he wants to! It is the one respectable bogey we have left—organisation. But let us not be affrighted by names. What a wonderful triumph of organisation is the human hand—nerves, veins, muscles, ligaments, joints, bones, flesh, and skin—so tempered and co-operative that man has in his hand the finest tool in the universe. What a magnificent result of organisation is human society, all its millionfold nerves, parts, interests, on-goings, labours, songs, throes, agonies, tears, strivings, birth-pangs, all its traffic and merchandise, its contrivances whereby great cities are fed, its social claims, its clashing moral rights, the thunder of its battles, the tramp of its workmen, the clang of its hammers, its instruments of music, its courts of justice, its powerful inventions, its steady gain from age to age, all combining to make up that entity we call "Civilisation." "Oh," you say, "in these things of course we accept organisation." Which reminds me of Carlyle's exclamation when he was told that Mrs. Somerville had said, "She accepted the universe!" "Gad! She'd better!" replied the sage. On the whole I think we had better accept organisation.

But suppose we drop the offensive word and talk about union, federation, cohesion, and co-operation. Are we quite so sure as we used to be that freedom can only go along with a sheer, stark, extreme individualism? that we can only keep clear from the taint of ecclesiastical authority in isolation? that the Congregational principle does not need some slight modification in order that our churches may adapt themselves to the new conditions of our life to-day? Look only at one of the great changes in the life of England during the last 70 years and ask whether the pure Congregationalism which sufficed in the past is sufficient in these widely different times. The great exodus from the country to the towns, which all social reformers deplore, has affected our churches most disastrously, and made it almost impossible for them to exist on simple Congregational lines. They are not, cannot be, sufficient to themselves. Once independent, they now largely live in dependence on others. To-day they need a backing and a support from without which was not necessary when the population about them swarmed with resources and activity. We all recognise this new condition, and try to meet it in a halting way—anxiously bolstering up the idea that each church must at any rate keep up the appearance of a self-contained and self-sufficing whole. In all such cases the purely Congregational principle has broken down. But we are very reluctant to face the new order of things, which means the obligation of the strong to care for the weak. What responsibility does Yorkshire feel for Devonshire, or Liverpool for Suffolk?

Now, I take it that the root weakness lies in the fact that we are "churches" only, and not a church—that we are fragments and not a totality, the result of which is denominational anarchy. We have no centre, unless it be Carlyle's "Centre of indifference." The parts do not make a whole. It is as if the members of a body were lying on the ground, all disjointed, with no connecting ligaments, and no fair covering of rose-coloured flesh, binding them into one. And in such a condition the eye does sometimes say to the hand, "I have

no need of thee." Is it possible that these fragments shall become a whole—a living body—throwing itself with the weight and momentum of a single, solid mass into the Cause we have at heart? At these triennial gatherings we know the joy of united worship; but do we not deny ourselves too much the joy of united well-doing? Can we not gather into one our scattered congregations, and so check the waste and gain the power which comes of concentration? Think of the loneliness of many of our brethren, the struggle to keep afloat, the insecurity of income, the hopelessness of making any headway, grimly plodding on, not indeed without sympathy and help, but with sympathy and help which are quite inadequate to the necessities of the case. Surely we need to combine the energies of our churches, to create a living cohesion of forces, to be baptised into one heart, one spirit, one hope, pledged in all to loyal companionship, bound into the powerful unity of one organic frame, a society, a church, whose very breath and life and being shall be instinct with the joy of a common life and the power of a real fellowship.

This does not mean that we must be more sectarian than of old, or more exclusive, or that we are to be less free to think and advance, to sail to all points of the compass and to land on all distant shores. Still less does it mean the imposition of tests or the assumption of authority. It means the brotherhood of churches realised, brotherhood not afraid to be brotherhood by some bugbear of ecclesiasticism to which it might lead as a remote contingency. I suppose it might, and I suppose the earth might rush out of its orbit to give Mars a sounding thwack; and I think one about as likely as the other. So long as our churches are made up of truth-loving and freedom-loyal men no organisation can possibly endanger our liberties.

It is the mission of the Conference to bring about a more vital cohesion, and a larger, more intimate co-operation of our churches; to be their rallying point, their organ, their centre of attraction, so that when it speaks and acts it shall be with the voice and hands of a single body. The Conference stands for a united church. The Conference is not a society of private individuals; the churches are its constituents, and it is for them to make it more effective that their own effectiveness may be increased.

"But," says someone, with a view of reducing me to my ultimate atoms, "a united church must have a name, and the name is a rock on which you will split;" while another exclaims, "There is only one possible name." Well, I admit that the name is a forty-ton explosive question. For my part, I am a thousand times more concerned about the thing. Let us get that, and the name will settle itself. As for the name "Unitarian," I love it and I detest it. At present it causes more divisions among us than almost anything else. Let us resolutely push aside the name controversy, of which many of us are sick and ashamed. Let us for 20 years proclaim a truce of God on this dispute. Let the question be forbidden among us for that time; let us agree that anyone raising it, on this side or that, be sentenced to a fine of £10 and be kept in close confinement until he can give a lucid account of the Athanasian Creed. In the name of God, let us have a truce to the name-quarrel. To use Dr. Martineau's simile, "We have marched into this hall to-day under six different banners," and we should be no more united if burning five we marched out under one. Cohesion is not in names or banners.

4. The first step towards a united church is concerned with the pulpit, the status, recognition, settlement and maintenance of our ministry. There are those who tell us that all our plans, subscriptions, improved methods, closer union, are nothing unless we can improve our pulpits. Our greatest church need, they say, is better preaching, more human, more spiritual, more convincing, more in touch with common life. I do not disagree, only I am convinced you are not going to get it without taking the training, status, and maintenance of the ministry into account. And circumstances have so changed that a great deal of that depends no longer on congregational but on collective effort. It is true that no machinery, no status, no certainty of income, will ensure for our churches a race of prophets. But churches may do excellent work without having prophets in their pulpits. A prophet is a *rara avis;* a church is lucky that finds one in a century, and many a minister may render most Christlike service which God will abundantly own who has not much of the prophet about him. It is impossible to make arrangements for prophets any more than for earthquakes! Whenever they

appear they go their own way heedless of all our little contrivances. The ordinary minister is neither an Elijah nor an Ezekiel. I have known an occasional Jeremiah, but I have noticed that he is a prophet the churches unanimously declare is really too good for this sinful world. Of the Twelve Apostles it does not appear that more than three or four had prophetic gifts; the others quietly laboured on in much obscurity, unknown, unnoticed, sowing the seed, spreading the light according to their powers, content that their work should be unrecorded of men if it might live on in the great whole. It is for the ordinary apostle, the average minister, we are called to make arrangements, for the men whose labours are the spade-work of our churches, and who come under a category to which most of us belong. We need not be afraid to face the truth. All ministers are not endowed with great intellectual powers; the education of some has been very imperfect; the gift of eloquence is not possessed by all. You have no business to expect that all your ministers will be Channings, Beards and Armstrongs. All members of the medical profession are not characterised by special ability: All who paint are not great artists: there are feeble although useful members of the great guild of Literature: and not every lawyer is fit for the Woolsack. Yet all these average people have their place, and by their labours more than even by the genius of the few, the fabric of the world is maintained. I have a great affection for the ordinary minister—is he not bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh? The faithful, average minister, confined to a humble sphere, keeping his little corner of the world warm and glowing by the fire of his own love, is the man whose efforts lay the foundation of that united church we picture. Now, something *can* be done to improve *him*, and I aver that the ordinary pulpit may be made much more effective by wise methods, by arrangements to relieve it somewhat from the pressure of pecuniary care, by the backing it may receive from the church as a whole, by bringing its occupant out of his isolation into felt and conscious union.

Let us come to details. (*A*) I have not much to say as to *status*, except to endorse the remarks of one of my most thoughtful and most widely-respected correspondents, who writes: "The improvement of ministerial status will be brought about, not so much by securing in all cases a certain minimum stipend, as by amending the constitution of our churches. Our ministers lack status because everything connected with their work is precarious and undefined. In many instances we are not even members of our own Church Councils, and have no power over our own pulpits. Government by committee may seem to satisfy democratic requirements, but petty control in small matters does a great deal to check the spirit and zeal of men who, in proportion to their ability, feel that to do their work well, they must do it in their own way. Status goes with power to act, not with pay, and that is why men of means and position, with good degrees, will act as curates and curates in charge of missions, who would not be attracted by increased stipend at the cost of reduced liberty. I used to wonder why men with private income did not volunteer for ministry in some of our poorer churches, but I do not wonder now." My correspondent expresses a view which is deeply felt by many of our ministers. With greater freedom of speech in the pulpit than any church in Christendom, our ministers have less freedom of action outside the pulpit. That jealous exclusion from the Church Council is quite peculiar to ourselves; no other church keeps its ministers outside the Council doors. Things are constantly done in which he has no voice and about which he is never consulted. In cases where the church is governed by trustees this sometimes reaches a point which is almost intolerable. I have known the trustees of one of our chapels close its Sunday School without the minister knowing a word of it until it was done. There are several cases in which the trustees decline to let the minister know the state of their funds, and instances have come before me of the publication of church reports which the minister has never seen. So there comes about that mischievous division of interests which I am convinced is one source of weakness among us—whereby the minister has nothing to do with the business side of the church, and the committee has nothing to do with its spiritual side. Now there is nothing connected with a church, not even its lighting and ventilation, which is not the minister's business, and there is nothing connected with its religious life which is not the committee's business, and not until this artificial distinction between the spiritual and the secular dis-

appears—a distinction which exists in no other church in Christendom, whether Hierarchical, Presbyterian, Wesleyan, Nonconformist, or Lutheran—shall we remove the reproach that our ministry is a difficult position for self-respecting men.

(*B*) *Settlement.* The settlement and the removal of our ministers is always a difficult and often a painful problem. Sometimes it happens that the round man finds himself in a square hole; or a man becomes conscious that in this particular corner of the vineyard his work is done, his influence at an end, and it comes home to him that he would serve his church better by retiring than by staying on; or causes of difference have arisen—some want of tact or judgment which makes it desirable he should give way to another; there are, in fact, many reasons why men feel it would be good for them and good for the church that a change should take place. Yet how difficult, and often how humiliating, is the process! An interregnum cannot be afforded. The minister has a wife and children, and of necessity he must stay where he is until called elsewhere. How anxious the time, how painful the experience! If he has an influential brother-minister for a friend, he gets him to write to a vacant church, or he writes himself offering his services like a clerk seeking a situation; or he ear-wigs some much perplexed, much entreated secretary; or, lowest deep of all, he advertises. Churches, too, are not seldom in the same predicament, they do not know where to turn or whom to consult to secure the kind of minister they want, and they advertise for applications—a miserable device which brings them all the undesirables in the market. We need a trustworthy committee, which, without authority, shall act as a means of communication between ministers and churches, to which both ministers and churches might turn for advice and help. Such a committee, wisely constituted, might prevent many of the mistakes now made, and provide an honourable instead of a humiliating way out of many a delicate position. It is for the Conference, in the name and interests of the churches, to set up such an advisory and settlements committee, to which might also be referred, with advantage, the duties now discharged by various advisory boards as to the recognition of ministers arriving from other communions.

(*C*) Let us turn to a larger and yet more difficult subject—*the maintenance of the ministry.* At our first Confeernce, held in Liverpool 21 years ago, a paper was read on "Ministers' Stipends and Augmentation Funds" by our dear and honoured friend, Mr. Rawson. That paper brought to light a number of startling facts with regard to the impecuniosity of many of our ministers and the beggarly stipends on which they had to exist—heaven knows how! The result was a great moving of hearts and the immediate establishment of a Sustentation Fund, subscribed by our people generally. This fund has proved an incalculable blessing in many a minister's home, administered as it is with wisdom, sympathy, and open-handedness. But it has been sadly borne in upon me by incontestible evidence that to-day we are no better off than we were 21 years ago, for while the Sustentation Fund is to the good, the contributions of the local churches have diminished, so that the average annual stipend remains much as it was. Following Mr. Rawson's lead, I sent to every minister in charge of a congregation in England and Wales a circular asking for information as to the total ministerial income and the sources from whence derived. I have not, indeed, covered so wide an area as Mr. Rawson, who included Scotland and Ireland in his inquiries. I have confined my attention to England and Wales, as it seems to me that Scotland and Ireland have their own special needs and their own special funds, and must, at any rate at this stage, be considered separately. The number of circulars sent out was 250, of which number 240 were returned filled in, and I have obtained information with regard to four others. My figures and averages therefore are based upon the stipends paid in 244 churches, including in this category Missionaries and Missionary Agents. In the first place, for the sake of comparison with the condition of things 21 years ago, I will take exactly the same course as Mr. Rawson. At that time the Sustentation Fund was not in existence, and Mr. Rawson excluded the Augmentation Fund from his returns. My first batch of figures will also exclude these two funds.

The total income on this basis of the 244 ministers is £44,873, or an average of £184 16s. Mr. Rawson's returns, including Scotland and Ireland, numbered 253, and the total income was £46,543, with an average of £184. So far,

then, there seems to be an increase of 16s. per head during the 21 years. But this is quite fallacious, for if Scotland and Ireland had been included the average would have been appreciably lowered, as the stipends in these countries rule a good deal beneath those in England. Further, the total to-day includes Missionary Agents, who were not in existence at the first conference. But without making any further deductions we see that the churches themselves are actually raising less to-day for ministerial stipends than they were 21 years ago. If, however, we go on beyond Mr. Rawson's figures, and include the total income of the Augmentation Fund and the grants of the Sustentation Fund, the average will be brought up to £199, which, if not satisfactory, is not so alarming as might have been feared. Yet when we analyse these figures a little further some startling results appear. Taking the returns exactly as they were sent us, including grants from all sources, they shew that there are

22	stipends	under	£100,	as against	45	in 1882
47	,, of	£100 ,,	£150	,,	56	,,
72	,,	£150 ,,	£200	,,	70	,,
69	,,	£200 ,,	£300	,,	43	,,
20	,,	£300 ,,	£400	,,	20	,,
5	,,	£400 ,,	£500	,,	6	,,
9	,,	£500	and upwards		13	,,

This, again, on the surface does not seem very discouraging, for while the larger stipends have diminished in number and amount the smaller ones have improved, and there has been a considerable increase in the medium stipends. On the other hand, this table includes the Sustentation and Augmentation grants which Mr. Rawson's table did not include, while it excludes the lowering element of Scotland and Ireland.

Next let us ask, How are these stipends made up? At once we are met with the staggering fact that *two-thirds of our churches receive assistance from outside sources.* Only one-third of our churches are self-supporting. The total received by 244 ministers from all sources, including Augmentation and Sustentation Funds, is £48,547, of which the living congregations raise by pew rents, subscriptions, collections, sales of work, and other devices £24,104—in round numbers just one-half. Endowments account for £11,310, while grants from various funds, half-a-dozen in number; grants from the British and Foreign, and Local Associations, with contributions from other outside sources, supply the balance of £12,907. The figures will be seen more clearly in tabulated form:—

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Total of 244 Stipends	48,547	0	0			
Contributed by:						
Congregations				24,104	0	0
Endowments				11,310	0	0
Local Associations...				2,604	0	0
B. and F.				1,599	0	0
Augmentation Fund				2,000	0	0
Sustentation ,, ...				1,450	0	0
Various sources, including grants from B. and F. and Local Associations for Missionary Agents, etc., Grants from Trust Funds, Private Benefactions, etc.				5,256	0	0
				48,323	0	0
Unaccounted for				224	0	0
	48,547	0	0	48,547	0	0

Average Stipend per Minister ... ... £199.
,, Contribution of Congregation to Stipend £98.

I know not how it may strike others, but for myself I am appalled to know that only one-third of our churches are self-supporting, and that the ministers of two-thirds are compelled to seek aid from other quarters than their own congregations. Not less startling is it to find that the living congregations—apart from endowments—only supply one-half of the total ministerial income. These two facts need no comment except that of anxious reflection. They reveal a condition of things which no one can regard as healthy—a condition of things, moreover, which does not at all square with pure and simple Congregationalism.

There has been in the last 21 years a considerable addition to church endowments, without, as you see, in any way adding to the average of ministerial stipends. In 1882 Mr. Rawson spoke strongly on the blighting effect of endowments. I think he would speak still more strongly to-day. In ten cases which have come under my notice the increased endowments amount to nearly £20,000. But the ministers of those churches are not one penny the better, and in two instances their incomes have diminished. The endowments of the dead have stopped the flow of contributions from the living, and I think some of our pious ancestors would turn in their graves if they knew that their legacies had only relieved other people from their subscriptions. There are 19 churches which do not contribute one

farthing to their ministers' stipends, the whole being found by endowments. There is one amusing case of a stipend from endowment of £225 which the congregation make up to £230. I hear men say, "If it were not for their endowments many of our places could not live." I beg leave to doubt it. I am rather inclined to think it is their endowments which have killed them. Energy, enterprise, resourcefulness, initiative, and generosity have all been atrophied by the knowledge that the place could carry on under any circumstances. There are painful matters connected with some of these endowments on which something might be said if there were time. I will only add here that trustees who do not present a yearly balance-sheet of their funds to the congregation are guilty of a grave dereliction of public duty.

Let us return for a minute or two to the incomes under £150 a year. It is not creditable to us that there should be 69 of our ministers living on this starvation wage. I suppose that most of us when we entered upon the ministry expected to be poor, were willing to be poor—and we have not been disappointed! But we hardly thought we should be indecently poor, glad of parcels of cast-off clothing for our wives and children! Certainly no one can ever make money, or ought to make money, in the ministry. To begin with, all our young men see the Divine beauty of that early but never obsolete Scripture: "It is not good for man to be alone," and proceed to verify it as soon as possible. I have sometimes thought it would be a good thing to have a celibate class in the ranks of our ministry, with a view to service in poor places—temporary celibates say for ten years; but having married early myself I do not feel I am the right man to advocate that self-denying ordinance. So ministers cannot make money. Their wives and children and other sad necessities will keep them right up to the limit of their income. Then the very calling in which we are engaged forbids parsimoniousness, and the half-crown which might have gone into the P.O. Savings Bank has got itself transferred into jelly and oranges for a sick girl dying of consumption. No, you cannot make money in the ministry. I have no doubt that in the long run it is better so. It is well that the worldly prizes of our business should not be remarkably glittering. If they were we might have a glut of self-seeking men entering our doors. We have no deaneries and canonries to tempt anybody; we have no pulpits of £1000 and £1200 a year like the great Nonconformist churches. We are a poor community. But there are worse ills than poverty. I am astonished at the cheerfulness with which men write of their struggles. I have letters sent with these returns which would make you both cry and laugh at the mingled pathos and humour of their writers' stresses and distresses. In some of the poorest among us there is a strong spirit of life and gladness. One brother who has never had more than £30 a year—a brother highly esteemed by all who know him—a fully accredited minister, mind you—writes: "It is 30 years since I left orthodoxy definitely and started these services. Humanly speaking, I have been single-handed all that time; but, though it has been a task I could not have commenced had I foreseen its uphill character, yet it has been a perpetual joy to me. My intention is to keep on as long as I can—whether it adds to my small income or no. . . . Of course, if I could have more help I should be grateful: though I hope you will not think I am at all dissatisfied."—(O brave brother!)—"It is so supreme a privilege to be allowed to proclaim our glorious message that no word of complaint shall ever come from me of what it brings in the way of £ s. d." Another brother receiving £50 a year writes: "I have been labouring here for now 40 years, and shall soon give up. But I am concerned for the man who comes after me that he may not have quite so hard a time as I have known." A third brother whose total income (entirely from endowment) is £130 a year writes: "Out of my stipend I pay for the gas and the cleaning of the chapel." Another with £90 a year writes: "To keep out of debt on such a stipend is almost heroic!" Almost—let me say, altogether! You see these men are not crushed; they can still pray and trust in God, and they display a wonderful ability to live without any visible means of support. But I want to ask you laymen if you think it is right that men whom you call into the ministry should suffer that strain and privation?

I find that a more serious cause for anxiety than the limitation of income is its uncertainty; the necessity it involves for yearly applications to various funds—applications which are like begging for charity; the dread that next year one may have to do without a certain £5 grant, which perhaps means going through another winter without a great coat. Worse than the

scantiness of the amount are the conditions by which it is secured—delayed payments—pitiable appeals to trustees for funds—the stipend to be called for and paid over the counter of a shop—things that eat into a man like a canker. You wonder why more of our educated youths do not enter the ministry. Under the circumstances I wonder at the presence of so many. These things and their like choke off many a young soul who might otherwise have added lustre to our ranks. It is not often that impulse and enthusiasm concerning the ministry are so strong in youth as to take no heed of difficulties. The best students I have known wanted a good deal of persuasion at the first, and were conscious of no mighty, overwhelming call before which any consideration of income seemed contemptible. It is rarely the compulsion works so strongly that the youth says, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." What carries most men into the ministry is the pull of numerous forces, many of which he is quite unconscious. And in that tentative stage, before a man's life work is clearly seen, this prospect of poverty, this uncertainty of decent maintenance, acts as a powerful deterrent. A young man does not expect much; he knows enough of the ministry to be convinced that it is no path of fortune; but, however small the income, he would like to be assured of its reasonable certainty, its freedom from begging letters and humiliating conditions, and its punctual payment.

Is it not time we reconsidered our methods of church and ministerial aid? With the best intentions in the world a great deal of our help does not help; with a good deal of generous giving our giving quickens no vital pulse; with considerable funds at our disposal, yet, from want of proper co-ordination, effective union, and a method of assistance better adapted to the conditions of our time, our funds do sadly and manifestly fail of adequate results. To go on day after day, giving just sufficient help to keep a drowning man's chin above water, is a depressing business. Either give him more help, or—let him go under and be put out of his misery! A fire that has smouldered for five-and-twenty years because it has been fed only with damp coal dust had better go out, unless you are prepared to kindle it into a life-giving flame by a more generous supply of fuel. You have 69 ministers with stipends of less than £150 a year. It is true most of these churches would have ceased to be had you not come to their help. But having kept them just alive you have incurred a certain responsibility towards them to nourish their feeble life into vigour and usefulness. We are deceived by the fallacy that the number of our churches indicates the strength of our cause. Our cause might actually be stronger if we had fewer churches on which we concentrated our strength and made flourishing. I notice an almost feverish desire to spread ourselves, however thinly, over as wide an area as possible. But adequate assistance to one is better for the cause than inadequate assistance to three. Our laymen say to me: "Some of these churches are but barren fig-trees—why not cut them down?" But before the fig-tree in the parable was so severely treated it was given its chance—it was digged about and manured and stimulated by a generous husbandry. Many of these barren churches have never had their chance; the digging has been too feeble, the manure too scanty, the husbandry too parsimonious. We ought to resolve that there shall be no accredited minister serving one of our churches with a less stipend than £150 a year. In towns the minimum should be £200. But let us take a step at a time. To bring up the stipends of these 69 ministers to £150 a year requires an addition to our funds of £3177 per annum. You will be relieved to hear that I do not suggest the raising of any new fund. Let us rather strengthen and wisely organise the existing funds—our Local Associations, the Sustentation Fund, the British and Foreign, etc. But given that, the need presses upon us of reconsidering how and on what terms assistance is to be given, and whether we ought not to devise some plan by which local effort shall be better stimulated, by which the stipend shall go on with reasonable certainty, and the ministers saved from all those humiliating devices and begging appeals which to a self-respecting man are most galling.

This is the immediate task to which the Conference should address itself. Let the Conference approach the authorities of these and all other funds from which assistance is derived, with a view to the formation of a *Joint Maintenance Board*, through which all help shall be given. There are various Trust Funds for the augmentation of ministers' stipends; the British and Foreign devotes a certain portion of

its income to the same object; the Local Associations give a large amount of assistance. I would have all these bodies represented at a Joint Board in proportion to the amount they dispense for this purpose, charged with the duty, first of all, of seeing that no minister in active service, whose name is worthy of being kept on the roll, has a less stipend than the minimum. There should be no more doles of £5 to one and £10 to another, given by small trust funds after an inordinate amount of begging and pressure. Neither would there be a series of appeals from a minister to the officials of half-a-dozen trusts for these petty grants. A yearly statement, on a properly prepared form, sent in to the Local Associations, and from thence to the Joint Board, would be sufficient, and the help would be given in one sum. No doubt there would have to be conditions complied with, local and personal, and such a Board might feel it necessary and possible to take steps which no one fund could suggest. It might institute in a given district the Circuit system—or it might affiliate two churches under one minister—or it might say, considering the numbers and local contributions, this church or that has no claims to a minister of its own —or it might turn a dying church into a flourishing mission. It would mean, also, the sacrifice of little bits of individual patronage on the part of trustees, but in return, the representatives of trusts sitting at a Joint Board, would feel that they were serving the churches in a much more effective and satisfactory manner when co-operating with others in a large scheme than when acting alone. Further, it would have the immense advantage of securing that *the same principles and methods of aid shall apply everywhere.* If the funds of all trusts and societies now giving aid were dealt with as a whole by a thoroughly representative body, a great saving would be effected, much friction would be avoided, overlapping would be impossible, no one would benefit by his tough pertinacity, no one would suffer because of his modest reticence. If any legal difficulty stood in the way of making a common fund, it might be arranged that the grant to one church should be paid out of this fund and the grant to another out of that. But the amount will be settled by the whole Board, to which all applications will have to be addressed.

Now I see that a dozen objectors are waiting impatiently to jump down my throat. But I shall elude them. For I do not ask that we should come to any decision to-day on so important and far-reaching a scheme. I can foresee many difficulties, and many points that want a great deal more elucidation than I can now give them. I have no time to enter upon necessary details. It is clear that much will have to be considered, and many relations amicably adjusted, before such a scheme can hope for general acceptance. All I ask to-day is that the Committee shall be authorised to take these suggestions into careful consideration, with power to enter into communication and conference with the authorities of the various funds and societies interested, and to submit any conclusions they may arrive at to a special meeting of the Conference to be held at such time as they may deem convenient. The Conference is in a favourable position for undertaking this work of consultation, mediation, and co-ordination, by the very fact that it has no funds of its own, and yet is representative of all the interests involved. Such a movement carried through would go far to weld our scattered societies into a church. Representing the churches as a whole, the Conference is not only justified, it would be neglecting a clear call of duty, if it did not seek to remedy the grievous ills of our present system and condition, by effort to secure the co-operation of all in such united action as will serve to show that our glowing language about brotherhood and fellowship is not empty rhetoric, but is prepared to translate itself into vital reality. It is said that the authorities of our various funds will never come into a general scheme, that they are too jealous of their patronage, too conservative in their habits, too much bound about by red tape, and half-a-dozen other things. I do not believe it. I will not believe it until the effort is made, and I shall not believe it then, for I shall pray and labour for their conversion. What! Is it not possible for men of a common faith, having one object in view, standing for churches which have difficulties more than others, and which more than others bear witness for brotherhood, to create a working union for the welfare of the whole? Does fellowship mean no more than coming together in a big meeting once in three years? Are we so going to hug our independence that we shall refuse for ever voluntary co-operation for the common good? I appeal to the larger senti-

ments of church life and associated action. Are we never to feel the warmth, the power, the momentum of a single, united community, moving hand in hand towards one high aim, thrilled by one expectation? Are our churches to be for ever lonely, fragmentary, separate, each left to struggle as it may, without any strong, deep sense of fellowship in high chivalry to care even more for the weak than the strong? Few, feeble, solitary, and scattered as they are, how much do they need the encouragement of loyal comradeship, the strength of union, the support of the whole felt in all its parts, and the joy of marching in step, one army, under the banner of freedom, light and truth!

News from the Field.

We note, with regret, the following resignations of ministers among us since our last issue :—The *Rev. C. E. Oliver*, of *Denton;* the *Rev. G. V. Crook*, of *Taunton;* the *Rev. Dr. Klein*, of *Liverpool;* and the *Rev. G. S. Hitchcock*, of *Chatham*. The last of these has made the mighty leap from the freest of free churches to the bosom of Rome. Wherever men go, who are obedient to conscience, we bid them God speed!

The *Rev. John Birks*, who resigned his ministry at *Derby*, has soon put on the harness again. He goes to *Great Yarmouth*.

The *Rev. E. W. Lummis* has had a warm welcome on the beginning of his ministry at *Leicester*.

Ere long we hope to report that the important congregations of *Warrington*, *Sheffield*, *Crydon*, *Church of Messiah*, *Birmingham*, and *Ullet Road*, *Liverpool*, have found able men to lead their worship and quicken their life.

Work has been going on vigorously in various parts of the country. The new church at *Birkenhead* has been opened in most auspicious circumstances, and we cordially congratulate *Mr. Crossley* and his congregation upon their great achievement. At *Shrewsbury* the interesting old church has had a re-birth. Great improvements and extensions have taken place. Beauty and utility have gone hand in hand. The re-opening services were conducted by the *Revs. Joseph Wood* and *James Street*. We shall be glad when we can congratulate *Mr. Street* and his congregation on the removing of all liabilities connected with the good work they have done.

At *Glasgow* our friends are giving such signs of progress that they have added £50 a year to the stipend of their minister. We should like to hear that other churches are following this example.

The *Manchester District Association*, the *North-East Lancashire Association*, the *South-East Wales Unitarian Society* have all held their annual meetings, and, in each case, there is a chronicle of good work done, and a spirit of hopefulness displayed which gives promise of better things for the time to come.

Two of our *Domestic Missions—Bristol* and *Mansford Street*, *London*—have reached another mile-stone. They both tell of splendid work, but, notably in London, there is an outcry for more funds for the successful furtherance of the great aims of the Mission. In these days of growing zeal among us an appeal like this is sure to be responded to.

But the greatest thing of the past month is the response to the anonymous subscriber of £1000 a year to the funds of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. More than £2000 a year extra has already been promised. What the full response may be who can tell? What will be done with this great instrument? We have great confidence that large aims, Catholicity of spirit, and generosity towards our struggling Causes will animate the minds of those who have to deal with these funds. There must be no narrowness, and no clashing or controversy with other good works and workers, and then this large fund will prove to be a large blessing.

Before our issue for May is out the great meetings of the National Conference will have been held. It needs no gift of prophecy to be assured that these meetings will give a lofty tone and a fine spirit to our work and workers, and send us all on our way with better heart and larger hope.

We record, with great pleasure, the appreciation shewn by the London University of one of our young and most promising ministers, the *Rev. Dr. Mellone*, of *Holywood*. They have appointed him one of the Examiners in Philosophy—a distinction well earned. There should be room in our own colleges for men of this stamp.

It is not to be wondered at that the *Portland Street* people should wish *Mr. Stopford Brooke* to continue his services to them, and we hope he may see his way to respond to the urgent request which has been made to him.

The Hibbert Journal is going on its prosperous way and winning friends on all sides. Its career is phenomenal.

We welcome, with glad hearts, a new volume of sermons from *Dr. Martineau*. Out of his treasure house there are evidently new stores of golden thoughts to come which will enrich the world. In this book we have reached the rich veins of ore again.

And *Mr. Carpenter* comes to us in pleasing form in his new volume on "The Bible in the Nineteenth Century." The spoken lectures, crystallised in this fine volume, will be welcomed by hundreds who are already grateful for messages already received from the accomplished scholar and thinker.

We have to record, with sorrow, the passing away from us of *Mrs. John Wilson*, the widow of our late valued and honoured minister of *Laurence Street*, *Birmingham*. *Mrs. Wilson* was herself a devoted worker, and her name and work are lovingly remembered. *Mr. C. W. Wilmer*, of *Birkenhead*, and *Mr. E. Goldschmidt*, of *Nottingham*, have also left our earthly ranks. But new soldiers fill the vacant places, and the march towards the Kingdom of God ever goes on.

April 16th, 1903. SCRUTATOR.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

The New Umbrella.

Oh, Ella!
With her first umbrella!
She walked abroad like any queen,
She held it proudly for display,
Admired its handle, stroked its sheen.
Was ever little girl more gay?

Dear Ella!
Such a small umbrella!
Once in the rain-swept market-place
I met her. Dripping were her curls.
She looked, despite her sunny face,
The most forlorn of little girls.

"Why, Ella!
Where's your new umbrella?"
Said I, "The storm has drenched your hair.
Just see your frock! Just see your hat!"
And what is this you hug with care,
A broom, a fiddle, or a cat?"

Oh, Ella!
With her first umbrella!
She looked at me, and shyly spoke,
The raindrops pelting on her yet:
"I have it here beneath my cloak,
Because, you see, it might get wet!"

—*Agnes Lee.*

Good Resolutions.

These are things I'll never do
When I'm all grown up, like you,—
Send my little girl to bed
When her story-book's half read;
Call her in to practice scales
When she's hunting Indian trails;
Make her keep an apron on
When she wears her best pink gown;
Give her just oatmeal and bread
When the rest have cakes instead;
Comb the snarls out twice a day
When the hair gets rough in play,—
Was your hair so hard to curl
When you were a little girl?

The Merry Rain-drops.

Hark! just hear the rain-drops fall,
Pitter, patter 'gainst the wall,
Pitter, patter on the shingle,—
Don't they make a merry jingle?
Now they dash, now they splash,
On the gravel, on the grass.

Pitter, patter, now they glide,
Pushing, rushing, side by side,
Flashing, splashing, to and fro,
Crossing, passing, there they go!
Dashing against the window-pane,
Jolly, jolly drops of rain.

Dancing, tumbling, here they come,
Skipping, tripping,—oh, what fun!
Now with many a hop and bound,
See, they sink into the ground,
And the lively race is done.
Tell me, please, which rain-drop won.

Music Everywhere.

Let me go where'er I will,
I hear a sky-born music still:
It sounds from all things old,
It sounds from all things young,
From all that's fair, from all that's foul,
Peals out a cheerful song.
It is not only in the rose,
It is not only in the bird,
Not only where the rainbow glows,
Nor in the song of woman heard,
But in the darkest, meanest things,
There alway, alway something sings.
'Tis not in the high stars alone,
Nor in the cups of budding flowers,
Nor in the redbreast's mellow tone,
Nor in the bow that smiles in showers,
But in the mud and scum of things
There alway, alway something sings.

—*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

Matin Song.

Early in the morning, when I lie awake in bed,
Inside the house there's not a noise,
Except the clock's tick-tocky voice;
And tiny mews the kitten makes to say she must be fed.

Shadows run along the blinds, and through them goes and comes
A swishy sound of little leaves,
The coo of doves upon the eaves,
The dub, dub, of the woodpecker who on the old tree drums.

Early in the morning they're as wide-awake as me;
But grown-up folk are sound asleep,
Their company I cannot keep.
It isn't lonesome like the night, though why I do not see.

There outdoors are flowers, all standing up in bed,
Shaking their heads with many a shake
After the bath of dew they take,
The shiny drops upon each face yellow or blue or red.

And soft the wind is whispering, blowing strange things to me.
It only is in morning land
Into my head such dreams are fanned,
Making me full of happiness,—as full as child can be.